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AUTHOR	Devlin, Kevin M.
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ABSTRACT

In the early 1980s Indiana had one of the nation's lowest percentages of persons between the ages of 18 and 24 enrolled in college. To increase college enrollment, the Indiana General Assembly established the Indiana College Placement and Assessment Center (ICPAC) to counsel high school students and help them to prepare for college. ICPAC communicates with high school students and their families while students are making decisions about their future. It emphasizes the students' needs for postsecondary education and career planning. While ICPAC publications and services are directed toward all high school students, the program emphasizes communication with 9th-graders. ICPAC services include: a database on individual students (information collected includes high school grades and coursework, postsecondary education plans, career interests, concerns and informational needs; summary reports to schools of annual surveys of 9th-graders; newsletters and publications; postsecondary preparedness reports; presentations and exhibits; a telephone hotline; statewide computer network; and education coalition. Public and private funds support ICPAC. It is too soon to measure the effectiveness of the program. Other states also offer early intervention, postsecondary preparation programs, and minority preparation programs. There are few barriers to transfer of a program such as ICPAC to other states. ICPAC has been popular with high school students and their parents, as well as many state government officials. (ABL)

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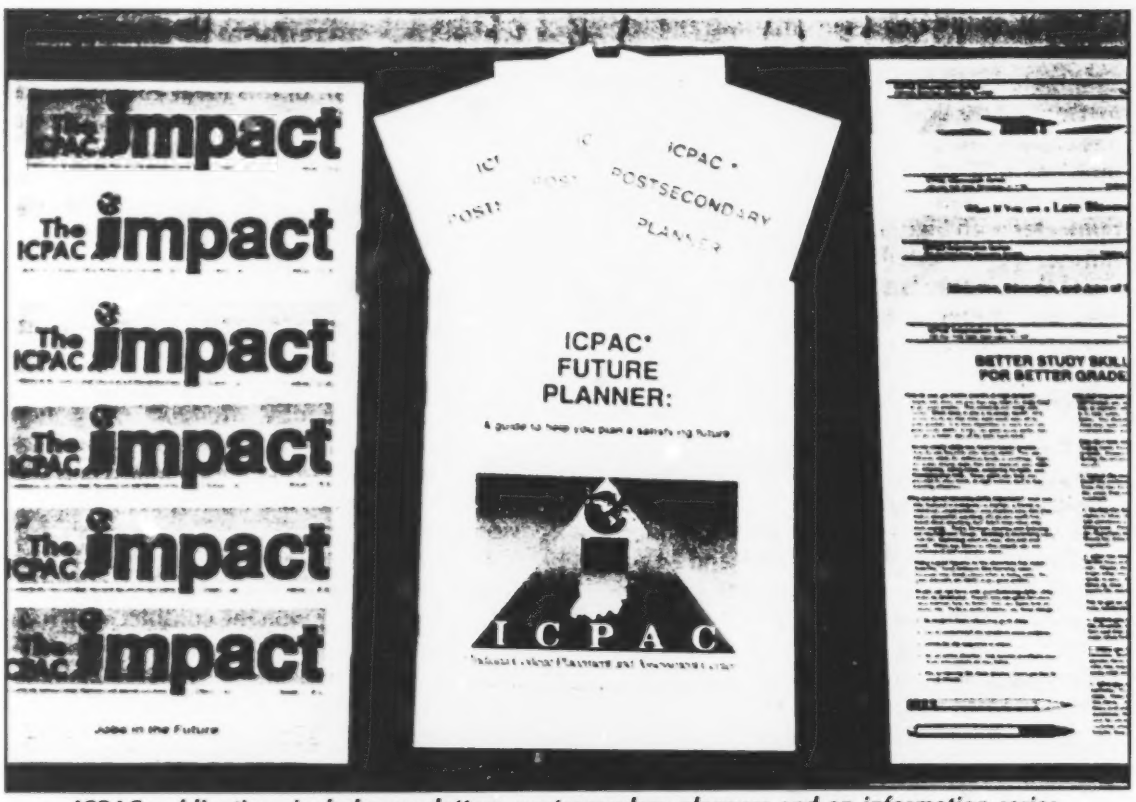
innovations

Indiana's College Placement and Assessment Center

by Kevin M. Devlin



ICPAC publications include newsletters, postsecondary planners and an information series.

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In Brief

In the early 1980s, Indiana had one of the nation's lowest percentages of persons between the ages of 18 and 24 enrolled in college. To increase college enrollment, the Indiana General Assembly established the Indiana College Placement and Assessment Center (ICPAC). Its authorizing legislation, House Bill 1373, directed the center to counsel high school students and help prepare them for college.

Supervised by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, the center seeks to improve student participation in and preparation for postsecondary education; to encourage families of high school students to plan for college; and to encourage greater parental involvement in students' educational decisions.

Introduction

State governments, facing a competitive international economy, are striving to improve their work forces and attract new employers. Although advanced education would enhance student verbal and technical skills, many high school students need information and encouragement to develop career goals and consider higher education. Moreover, the cost of postsecondary education has increased dramatically in the past decade, and federal student financial aid has diminished.

Indiana's multifaceted ICPAC program communicates with high school students and their families while students are making decisions about their future (see Figure One). It emphasizes the students' need for postsecondary education and career planning.

Background

In the mid-1980s, Indiana initiated efforts to increase its college participation rates, which were among the lowest in the nation. In 1986, for example, Indiana resident undergraduate enrollment between the ages of 18 and 24 was 33.3 percent, according to the Indiana Commission on Higher Education. That compared unfavorably with a national average participation rate of 38.8 percent as well as with the participation rates among the adjacent states of Illinois, Michigan and Ohio. Also, in 1985, only 29 percent of Indiana adults had completed one year or more of postsecondary education.

Until the 1970s, Indiana high school graduates could obtain high-paying manufacturing jobs. In some areas, secondary schools prepared students for industrial careers instead of postsecondary education. As manufacturing jobs have disappeared, Indiana has prepared for an economy based upon service and information industries. ICPAC was conceived as a means of strengthening the education of young people prior to their entry into the job market.

Upon the recommendation of the state's Commission for Higher Education in 1986, the Indiana General Assembly allocated $150,000 to establish a pilot program serving approximately 4,900 ninth grade students. Twenty-one different high schools were selected from various regions of the state and urban, rural or suburban areas. In 1987, the state legislature expanded the program with a $400,000 appropriation to all high schools. The 1989 General Assembly increased funding to more than $750,000 to expand the program to all high school students, not just ninth graders.

Indiana's secondary curriculum permits a wide range of alternatives in course selection. The state mandates graduation requirements in general terms, but each of the state's 302 school corporations (districts) provides those courses that it believes satisfies state requirements. One result of this local autonomy has been a proliferation of courses from which students may choose. This is particularly evident in mathematics, where the requirement for two years of math may be fulfilled with courses other than algebra or geometry.

Another trend has been the emergence of distinct educational tracks, which, starting in the ninth grade, may place students on a path toward postsecondary education, or on a track which does not lead to education beyond high school. Consequently, students on a non-collegiate track may graduate from high school without course work in writing and mathematics which are vital for college admission.

In 1986, the Commission for Higher Education accepted bids to house and staff ICPAC. Indiana University won the contract, which covered one year and was extended for one year in 1987 and for two years in 1988. Although it is a state agency under the Commission for Higher Education, ICPAC's headquarters are located at Indiana University at Bloomington. During a June 8, 1990 meeting of the Higher Education Commission, a decision was made to keep ICPAC at Indiana University during the

Figure 1

IPAC INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

Source: Indiana College Placement and Assessment Center

1991-1993 biennium. In the future, the contract will be retained by mutual agreement of Indiana University and the Higher Education Commission, rather than through issues of requests for proposal.

Implementation

ICPAC provides guidance to high school students in tailoring their education to meet advanced education and career goals. Participating high schools, including virtually all the state's public high schools, provide student and parent or guardian names and home addresses to ICPAC so that the students may receive ICPAC mailings and publications.

While ICPAC publications and services are directed toward all high school students, the program emphasizes communications with ninth graders. For example, seven of ICPAC's 17 1989-90 mailings were sent to ninth graders. The program emphasizes communication with ninth graders because the first year of high school is when many students first consider what they will do after high school. Ninth graders are beginning their secondary education and have time to enroll in classes to prepare for college. Student awareness of advanced education increases during the last two years of high school, when colleges recruit students and high school guidance counselors discuss postsecondary plans with students. ICPAC attempts to fill the void in communication with freshmen.

Database Services

To compile a list of high school students, the program relies on information provided by participating schools. The 1988-89 listing included students from 350 public and 20 private schools, and grew to more than 400 schools in 1989-90. Information from two annual student/parent surveys sent to ninth and 11th graders is used to compile a database on individual students. Information collected includes high school grades and course work, postsecondary education plans, career interests, concerns and informational needs. Information about individual students is compiled in target lists, which are distributed to various postsecondary institutions and advocacy groups wishing to offer these students counseling and assistance. Survey results are published in annual reports comparing school and statewide data.

Survey results inform policy-makers, postsecondary institutions and service providers about students and their families. The surveys help identify students who need additional services. By reviewing students' educational plans and test scores, ICPAC is better able to advise students about preparation for postsecondary education and careers.

Survey Reports to Schools

ICPAC provides participating schools with summary reports of its annual survey of ninth graders. The reports provide guidance counselors and administrators a portrait of the postsecondary aspirations of their students. The cumulative reports give administrators a basis for identifying trends. The reports list the response frequencies for each item on the student questionnaire and compare the school's results with the state as a whole.

Newsletters and Publications

In 1988-89 ICPAC's communications staff produced four newsletters and several planning materials for statewide distribution to ninth grade students. As part of its expanded program in 1989-90, the staff produced three newsletters targeting ninth graders and two each for 10th, 11th and 12th graders. The newsletter series is entitled *ICPAC Impact*. Newsletters deal with such issues as selecting the best high school course curriculum to prepare for college; preparing for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT); and exploring career opportunities and the education background needed for them.

ICPAC staff has designed booklets called postsecondary planners to help ninth graders plan their education and select courses. Booklets for 11th graders emphasized preparation for college board examinations and those for 12th graders emphasized financial aid planning. ICPAC recommends four years of English, three or four years of mathematics, two or three years of science, two or three years of a foreign language, two years of social science or history, and fine arts or computer courses. Juniors received planners which concerned planning for college and employment. Seniors received financial aid planners. Planners for freshmen and juniors include a glossary of postsecondary terms; information about college financial aid; explanations of a four-year college degree, a two-year degree, and a voca-

tional/technical school education; and suggested extracurricular activities for high school students. ICPAC developed a publication entitled *Improving Postsecondary and Career Options: Selected Readings*, a compilation of journal articles, opinion papers, data reports and programs concerning educational and career options.

Staff prepared 12 topical papers in the *ICPAC Information Series* to address issues of concern to prospective postsecondary students, such as higher education costs, college admission tests, two-year schools and colleges, financial aid, and how to select a college. These materials deal with topics discussed in ICPAC newsletters in detail.

ICPAC staff published a series of *ICPAC Hotline Listings* dealing with questions commonly asked on the telephone hotline. Staff also distributed information packets to school guidance counselors, and produced and distributed a fall survey promotion packet for high school freshmen and juniors.

Postsecondary Preparedness Reports

ICPAC assesses each ninth grader's preparation for education beyond high school by combining its survey information with the student's achievement test scores on the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP). The test is a modified version of McGraw-Hill CTB's California Achievement Test and is administered by the Indiana Department of Education.

The ICPAC interpretations cover reading, language (particularly writing and speech), and mathematics. The 14,000 freshmen who responded to the 1989-90 ICPAC survey will receive reports for each topic area, based on their test scores and college plans. ICPAC issues these reports during the summer between ninth and 10th grades.

In three one-page letters, ICPAC advises the students on ways to strengthen their skills in reading, language and mathematics. Suggestions include developmental strategies for high school course selections, extracurricular activities and hobbies, communication with teachers, counselors and family members, and career exploration.

Presentations and Exhibits

ICPAC staff attend college fairs around the state to publicize the program, distribute ICPAC materials and publications, and encourage students to consider higher education. Staff also attend conferences and meetings of education professionals to encourage use of ICPAC's services.

Telephone Hotline

A toll-free telephone hotline, staffed by trained information specialists, is available to all high school students. Hotline staff answer questions about college admissions, academic programs, career information and financial aid.

A December 1988 grant from the Indiana Secondary Market for Education Loans, Inc., funded expansion of hotline services. Inquiries increased from 1,410 calls in 1987-88 to 3,913 calls in 1988-89 and 9,860 during 1989-90. A second "800" line was added to handle the increased telephone calls accepted in the 1989-90 school year. Brochures and business cards promoting the hotline are sent to secondary counselors, public libraries, human services and youth organizations.

Using commercial and ICPAC databases, hotline callers are given information on Indiana colleges, universities, and vocational/technical schools as well as other U.S. institutions. ICPAC has developed more than 200 Indiana institutional listings by college major and a library of college catalogs, career planning publications, and college financial aid information. The hotline also answers requests for ICPAC publications and other documents.

Statewide Computer Network

ICPAC is developing a statewide computer network called the Postsecondary Linkage and Assessment Network to link its offices with postsecondary admissions offices, secondary school guidance offices, human services agencies and libraries. When the network is implemented high school students will be able to use it to address questions to ICPAC or postsecondary school admissions offices. The network will include electronic bulletin board postings and electronic mail, as well as an electronic connection with the ICPAC hotline for users to request and receive information. The system will feature a self-assessment package for students and counselors, information about Indiana colleges, universities and vocational schools, interactive programs to help students make career and education decisions, financial aid information, and ICPAC reports and

publications.

The network will be accessible via a toll-free number and any terminal or microcomputer equipped with a modem and telecommunications software. Students can obtain access to programs by using a menu which appears on the screen after logging onto the system. The network has been developed under a grant from the Indiana Secondary Market for Education Loans.

Education Coalition

The Steering Committee for Improved Participation in Postsecondary Education (SCIPPE) is a coalition of business, philanthropic, professional organizations, state agencies and 58 postsecondary institutions that encourage high school students to seek higher education. ICPAC provides considerable technical assistance and logistical support for SCIPPE. Using student information from the ICPAC ninth-grade survey, the committee identifies students who might not pursue higher education without encouragement. Committee volunteers, many of whom are high school guidance counselors or college admissions officers, work with those who would be the first in their family to go to college, students with high grades who are undecided about their plans after high school or do not plan a postsecondary education for financial reasons, students from single-parent homes, and minority students.

In 1989, the committee provided information and services to about 16,150 students based on their needs, risk factors and other characteristics. ICPAC annually develops statewide and regional versions of the *SCIPPE Campaign Organizer*, a directory of participating postsecondary institutions and contact persons and ICPAC-participating secondary schools and contact persons. ICPAC distributes information packets on SCIPPE's activities to 1,400 secondary school counselors. Ninth graders receive a committee-developed brochure entitled "It's Up to Me!," which includes a high school planning chart, advice on how to pay for college, and keys to success. In 1990-91 the committee will direct its brochure toward eighth graders. The committee also encourages its participants to use ICPAC publications.

Program Staffing and Costs

The program receives more than $750,000 from a state appropriation. ICPAC's staff includes nine full-time employees, eight graduate assistants, most of whom are doctoral candidates in education, and eight part-time employees who are undergraduates at Indiana University. All staff are employees of Indiana University under its contract with the Indiana Commission for Higher Education.

Funding is obtained from sources outside state government. In addition to the Indiana Secondary Market for Education Loans grant to help fund the hotline, the program received a grant from the Lilly Endowment in 1988. The grant will fund a three-year follow-up study of 4,923 ICPAC students who participated in the 1986 pilot program. The Indiana Secondary Market grant was used to purchase new equipment for the hotline, develop the computer network, and support additional staffing. Indiana University donated $32,256 in staff services and $10,392 in fringe benefits for staff in 1988-89 and contributes all charges for overhead.

Performance Evaluation

The program has provided information and services to schools and thousands of students and their families. ICPAC staff has produced a series of newsletters, college preparation planners, surveys, reports and nearly 20 other publications on higher education and career planning. Use of its hotline has nearly tripled each year and survey response rates have increased to more than 30 percent. At-risk students are targeted for special services to encourage them to attend college. The number of participating high schools increased from 302 in 1987-88 to 370 in 1989-90. Over 420 schools are anticipated to take part in 1990-91. These schools provide names and addresses of students and their guidance counselors use the program's information services. Support for ICPAC is reflected by grants from the Lilly Endowment and the Indiana Secondary Market for Education Loans and a large increase in program funding in the state budget.

Postsecondary attendance among 18- to 24-year-olds rose from 30.2 percent in 1982 to 35.2 percent in 1987, 37.2 percent in 1988 and 39.6 percent in 1989. Moreover, the number of high school seniors taking college board examinations increased slightly. The number of students taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) increased from 35,265 in 1987 to 38,611 in 1989.

The program's efforts to communicate with parents about their children's need for advanced education may be beneficial. Surveys by the Indiana University Center for Survey Research show that parental awareness of the value of postsecondary education is at a high point. Letters and survey comments from students suggest that the program has been well-received. A letter from a high school sophomore said that ICPAC helped her "find out how to get scholarships, choose a college, decide on a career, and take appropriate courses." A parent wrote that she found ICPAC "very informative and [I] appreciate the availability of the materials. I was especially pleased with the ICPAC Planner."

Many guidance counselors think highly of the program. Marilynne Curtis, director of Guidance at Wawasee High School in Syracuse, Ind., said ICPAC gives ninth graders valuable information on college admissions, testing and financial aid. Curtis also said that ICPAC is a good information resource for counselors as well as students. Mark Clough, guidance counselor at R. Nelson Snider High School in Fort Wayne, Ind., said the program reinforces high school counselors' advice for students to think about their goals and take appropriate courses. Clough said ICPAC newsletters, surveys and brochures are helpful to students and the SCIPPE program helps guidance counselors identify students who are undecided about their future plans.

It is too soon to measure the effectiveness of the program because the 1986 pilot served only 4,923 high school students, who will be entering college in the fall of 1990. The success of education programs tends to be best measured in the long run.

With its expanded 1989-90 program, ICPAC has developed a process to communicate with students throughout high school. It provides an extensive set of communications, which includes newsletters, surveys and postsecondary planners designed specifically for ninth and 11th graders. In 1989-90 communications also were sent to 12th graders for the first time. Expanding the program to high school upperclassmen enables ICPAC to follow up with students and retain a continuity in its message.

ICPAC's supporters in state government believe a better educated and qualified work force enhances Indiana's prospects for economic development. Former Gov. Robert Orr signed ICPAC's 1986 pilot program into law and approved the biennial budget bill's expansion of the program in 1987. Gov. Evan Bayh signed the $350,000 funding increase into law as part of Indiana's budget act in 1989. The governor also signed and sent letters to all high school participants in ICPAC encouraging them to consider higher education in Indiana and participate in the program.

The Commission for Higher Education initially encouraged the program and proposed its expansion in 1987 and 1989. While ICPAC's biennial appropriation of $768,800 in 1989 and $788,484 in 1990 is but a small portion of Indiana's education budget, its increased funding reflects its support.

Rep. Stanley G. Jones, Democratic floor leader of the Indiana House of Representatives, described ICPAC as an inexpensive solution to the problem of low postsecondary participation. The program has bipartisan support in the legislature. "There is a general recognition that it is an important program. It is supported because it is an excellent idea," Jones said.

Other States

Some states offer early intervention or postsecondary preparation programs. These states distribute booklets and encourage young students to prepare for higher education. Such programs emphasize high school courses to prepare students for college and the availability of financial aid. Many of these programs target seventh and ninth graders. Kentucky's Council on Higher Education, for example, distributes brochures to all ninth graders encouraging them to enroll in courses that will prepare them for college. Arizona, Massachusetts, North Dakota and West Virginia also distribute brochures to high school students to advise them as to how they should prepare for college.

Hawaii's Department of Education encourages youngsters in kindergarten through 12th grade to pursue postsecondary education by emphasizing career awareness and preparation. The Hawaii Career Development Continuum program, developed in 1975, trains teachers, counselors and administrators, and provides them with classroom materials to help them incorporate career development methods into their teaching. From kindergarten through grade six, the program nurtures social interaction with peers and development of basic skills; from grades seven to nine, it

emphasizes emotional independence and self-assurance; and from grade 10 to grade 12, it emphasizes postsecondary educational and career planning.

The program offers student interest surveys, individual and group career counseling, parent nights, visits to postsecondary institutions, and career and college fairs. The state Department of Labor and Industrial Relations has computerized career information and school-to-work transition centers.

For the past five years, Minnesota's Future Choices program, administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, has distributed 50,000 booklets and planning charts annually to eighth graders. The booklets advise students on postsecondary education in Minnesota. Information about vocational, community college and the state university systems is given. Topics covered include high school courses that will prepare students for college, high school extracurricular activities, and how to acquire college financial aid. The planning charts are a checklist of courses that correspond to a suggested curriculum, including four years of English and communications, three to four years of mathematics, three years of science, two to three years of social studies, and two to three years of foreign languages, as well as electives such as vocational education, computer training and the arts. Brochures are published in English, Spanish and Native American languages.

A videotape featuring discussions with high school students reinforces the printed materials. More than 300 copies of the tape have been distributed in Minnesota, and a new videotape emphasizing high school preparation for careers is scheduled for production in 1990.

The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, a student loan agency established and partially funded by the Legislature, also encourages students to pursue postsecondary education. It gives presentations to middle school students and offers workshops for eighth graders. One workshop covers high school curriculum and extracurricular activities, guidance resources, college financial aid and options after high school. Another workshop teaches self-awareness, self-esteem, self-assessment and decision-making, and covers high school courses, financial aid and postsecondary options. A third workshop covers college and financial planning and tips for parents.

Minority Preparation Programs

Encouraging minority and low-income students to attend college is the goal of Florida's College Outreach Program, Kentucky's Minority Preparation Program, and Michigan's Martin Luther King Jr./Cesar Chavez/Rosa Parks Initiative. The Florida College Reach-Out Program, administered by the state Department of Education, enables the state's universities and community colleges to motivate and prepare low-income high school students for college. Students who do not value postsecondary education or who are not developing basic learning skills are offered instruction and counseling about the benefits of higher education. Activities include audio-visual presentations, student trips to college campuses, workshops, tutoring and home and school visits. All 67 Florida school districts participate in the program.

The Kentucky Governor's Minority Student College Preparation Program helps prepare and encourage minorities to attend college. The program, established by a 1986 law, is administered by the Council on Higher Education. The program also seeks to prevent minority and disadvantaged students from dropping out of high school. State universities and community colleges offer tutoring in mathematics, science, communications and test skills. Students may attend programs in career awareness and tour college campuses. College students and other volunteers serve as counselors, mentors and special instructors to minority high school students.

The Martin Luther King, Jr./Cesar Chavez/Rosa Parks Initiative is administered by the Office of Minority Equity in the Michigan Department of Education. The program, established by 1986 legislation, is intended to combat high school dropout rates for minorities and increase minority enrollment at Michigan colleges and universities. A "college days" program introduces students to college life. In a visiting professors' program, minority faculty members from out-of-state are invited to teach at Michigan universities. The program offers student support services to retain minority and disadvantaged students, and provides scholarships and fellowships for minority graduate students who intend to earn doctorates and teach in Michigan colleges.

Postsecondary Introduction Programs

In some states, high school students are permitted to enroll in college classes. Under Minnesota's Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act, 11th and 12th graders can take public or private university courses for secondary or postsecondary credit. This program offers an introduction to postsecondary education and improves the chances a student will attend college. Other states, such as Ohio, have followed Minnesota in establishing such programs.

Washington state's Summer Motivation and Academic Residential Training Act (SMART) encourages low-income students to complete high school. SMART is coordinated by the state Higher Education Coordinating Board, state agencies, the University of Washington and Western Washington University. Students 14 and 15 years of age spend eight weeks during the summer at the universities studying language arts and mathematics. The program helps develop career goals, personal skills and community service activities. The program targets economically disadvantaged students at risk of dropping out of school. Other programs target at-risk minority students.

Transferability

There are few barriers to transfer of a program such as the Indiana College Placement and Assessment Center. Other states currently have modest programs that have similar goals. States can replicate its emphasis on funding and the interest and participation of students, parents, schools, and program staff. All states need to prepare students for a future with fewer low-skilled occupations and a greater number of jobs requiring advanced education. Many, facing austere fiscal conditions, need low-cost methods of encouraging students to pursue higher education.

One of the problems states face in reaching all students is the task of developing a data file of students. Indiana schools submit the names and home addresses of students, which are then used to compile a comprehensive data base comprised of the information submitted by Indiana high school students. Compiling a data base requires the cooperation of schools and students.

Another problem states might face is targeting brochures and services to students who do not speak English. This is not a major problem in Indiana, where only a small percentage of the students are from homes where English is not the primary language.

Conclusion

ICPAC has been popular with high school students and their parents, as well as many state government officials. A large increase in its legislative appropriation enabled it to expand its services to all high school grade levels and offer new services such as a computer network. The resources it provides appear to receive a great deal of use from its clients, high school students, their families and school counselors.

Although postsecondary participation rates have improved in Indiana during the past five years, it is too soon to judge the program's success, which is best measured over a longer period of time. Moreover, many students may leave Indiana permanently after graduating from high school. The real benefit from this program may not come until after the year 2000, when it should result in a better educated work force.

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For further information regarding the Indiana College Placement and Assessment Center, contact Karen Rasmussen, Assistant Commissioner for Planning and Policy Studies, Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 101 West Ohio Street, Suite 550, Indianapolis, IN 46204, (317) 232-1900. The author may be contacted at The Council of State Governments, Iron Works Pike, P.O. Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578-1910, (606) 231-1939.

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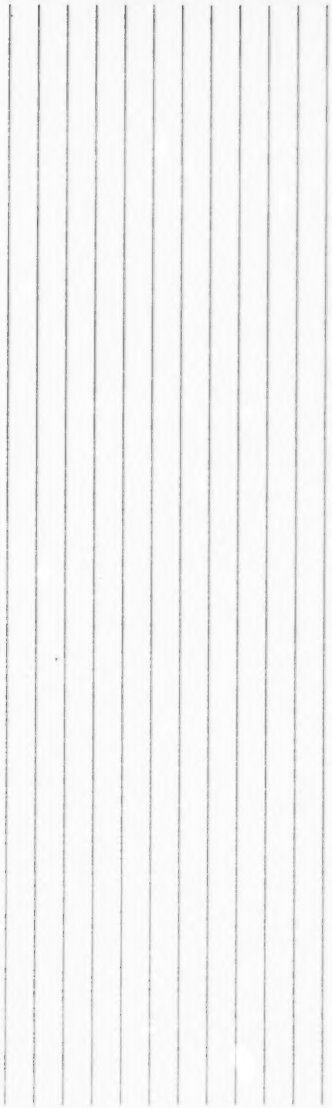
An ICPAC information specialist fields a question on the telephone hotline.

An ICPAC information specialist examines reference materials in response to a hotline inquiry.

Shared ideas become shared solutions.



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